



## Editorial

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# OUTLINES - CRITICAL PRACTICE STUDIES

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## Editorial

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce this new issue of *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*. It is composited by four innovative, thought-provoking and generous papers. On behalf of the editorial team, I hope you will enjoy them. This editorial points back in time to our last issue, giving a brief introduction to the articles to those of you, who might have missed out on this issue so far.

Vol. 17, no. 1 is all about collaboration. On a macro level one paper studies collaboration between Nepalese workers and their workplace during economic crises; on a micro level – or on the level of psychological functions – one paper investigates requirements to artificial speech-mediators for speech-impaired persons. In between these levels, papers on collaboration in development of educational practices dominates the issue.

Studying collaborative practices, or taking active part as a researcher in collaborative projects, is in a dialectical sense at the heart of *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*. In simple words this journal is built on an ethical credo that the enterprise of research is not just *about* the lives of people but just as well along *with* and *for* the people living. The five papers approach collaboration in particular ways, and with particular foci, which I, in the following, will do my best to present.

Hengst, McCartin, Valentino, Devenga and Sherril (2016) investigate communicative practices between speech-impaired and non-speech-impaired students navigating at a university campus. Their research-question regards the development of artificial speech-mediators, which in everyday life helps numerous persons with speech-disabilities. Building on Cultural Historical Activity Theory, the authors take a critical stand towards the interpretation of speech-devices as mere replacements of a damaged body part. Following their line of theory such devices are rather to be seen as mediators of distributed, communicative activity and dialogical practice. They find empirical support for this argument through a fine-grained analysis of everyday communicative practices of speech-impaired students as they navigate, interact and engage in dialogue with other human beings in fairly complex functional activity systems at the campus of University of

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Illinois, and this turns speech into a collaborative communicative medium rather than an organ of sounds. Language is thus not only communicative but a tool for making sense of and creating cultural meanings within a community.

On a macro level Bhattarai (2016) investigates collaborative practices amongst workers in the industrial sector during special conditions of industrial crises. Bhattarai's case is the historical situation of Nepal, where natural disasters such as massive earthquakes, flooding and landslides and only making things worse, a massacre of the royal family, riots and decades of political instability and economic deprivation. Reviewing the literature on organizational mechanisms, the author finds that a prevailing assumption is that industrial relations concentrate on welfare of individual enterprises, meaning that actors attempt to maximize their own interests while neglecting others'. While this might hold true during stable conditions, a different managerial and social logic seems to prevail during catastrophic crises as the ones the author investigates, where leaders cannot be held accountable for the critical situation. Bhattarai's empirical analysis shows a shift in orientation and practice from the principle of self-maintenance and cost minimization to the development of empathic interdependence in and between the managerial levels in order to ensure collective security by surplus-production, that subsequently functions as immunity of the industry. The paper demonstrates that collaboration, is thus not only a negotiation between two parties. Rather, it is embedded in cultural conditions, constraints and practices; it works with the aim of improving.

The three papers on educational development draw on research, in which the authors take an active part in the developmental educational processes. In this way each paper expands the objective of collaboration by emphasizing the active role of the researcher, evident in action research methodology. The empirical material stems from Greenland and Brazil.

Magalhães (2016) investigates how an intervention research (Teacher Support System) promotes the teaching of reading and writing in a public elementary school in São Paulo. The methodology of the research intervention builds on cultural-historical theory, and in particularly on the work of Vygotsky, and centers around the idea of interrelated learning (i.e. new ways of thinking and acting intentionally) between different groups of actors. The idea is, that this produces a redundancy of novelty considered more sustainable given its distributed and interrelated nature, thus enhancing transformation of the school community by creating "*mutual zones of proximal development, that supported teachers, coordinators and the principal*" (2016, p. 58), in developing dynamic and processual teaching strategies for reading and writing. In this sense Magalhães points to the fact that collaboration is not just a simple matter of collectively obtaining goals but to a high degree a matter of generating goals; goals that are experienced as being meaningful to the persons taking part in the collaboration. As such the papers expand the analysis of collaboration by emphasizing the contingent nature of the objective conditions for practices within the social world.

Glendøs (2016) takes us to East Greenland and opens a small window to her community research which, like the work of Magalhães, stresses the interdependent relations of change, structure, people and community as well as emphasizing the necessity of local utilization. Here, the community project centered on supporting the development of resilience **with** school children, who live in a challenging sociocultural environment. As a first step the project intervention was to make the voices of these children audible to the community, and in particular to the teachers of the school. In making such a move, the

participants reasoned, that there would be a ground for building local educational practices that were involved in the developmental situation of the pupils and thus supporting subjectivity (individually and collectively) through education. The paper investigates the teacher's responses to such an invitation through Valsiner's model of internalization and externalization. In this manner the paper offers a methodological direction for ideographical approaches (Hviid & Villadsen, 2017), which take the personal level of meaning-making as an ongoing point of reflection in the processes of collaborative interventions.

With Nasciutti, Veresov and de Aragão (2016), we are brought back to the Brazilian educational context and introduced to yet another piece of exemplary action research. While diagnosing, that the educational system in Brazil has progressed, the authors claim that there is still a tendency to split psychological functions from their cultural context, and thus perceive learning (and teaching) as individual issues going on inside each individual learner/teacher. The research conducted aimed at creating a group-platform as a source of development for the professionals. The theoretical frame of the project was cultural historical psychology with a special emphasis on the concepts of crises, social situations of development and perezhivanie, originally formulated by Vygotsky. Following a methodology of collaborative group practices, the authors investigated the group as a productive source of professional development. As the group is studied through a lens of historical conceptualizations (crises, social situations of development etc.) the group appears as an intentional and goal generativizing formation that cannot be reduced to the sum of the (singular) subjects forming it. The paper draws attention to the strengths and the developmental dynamics of the local, historical collective.

Enjoy!

Pernille Hviid, Editor.

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